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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 004420

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DEPARTMENT FOR DRL/MLGA LYNN SICADE AND SYLVIA HAMMOND

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/02/2017

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SUBJECT: DAS BARKS-RUGGLES' MEETINGS WITH FRENCH
INTELOCUTORS ON UNGA THIRD COMMITTEE RESOLUTIONS

REF: STATE 14620

Classified By: Deputy Political Counselor Andrew Young. Reasons 1.4b,d

11. (C) Summary. On October 24-25 in Paris, DRL DAS Erica Barks-Ruggles and Embassy staff advanced U.S. positions regarding thematic and country-specific resolutions proposed for the upcoming UN Third Committee with DAS-equivalent for Human Rights, Humanitarian and Social Affairs Jacques Pellet, Secretary of State for Human Rights Rama Yade,s Chief of

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Staff Brigitte Collet, Yade,s International Affairs Advisor Pierre Thenard and desk officers covering Kazakhstan and central Asia. Barks-Ruggles also reviewed priorities with Jean-Marie Fardeau, head of the newly established Human Rights Watch office in Paris. Government interlocutors expressed support for the U.S. resolutions on elections, Belarus and state-sanctioned rape and interest in U.S. ideas on how to deal with Cuba, notably suggesting expanding some of the targeted initiatives. End summary.

UNHRC

12. (C) In her meetings with Pellet and others, DAS Barks-Ruggles reiterated the USG,s overall disappointment with the United Nations Human Rights Committee's (HRC) performance and lack of balance while noting that it had managed to act in denouncing the situations in Sudan and Burma. Several of Barks-Ruggles, interlocutors, eager to cast the HRC in as positive a light as possible, also emphasized the HRC,s denunciation of events in Sudan and Burma as proof that the HRC is capable of playing a positive role in reinforcing respect for human rights. Pellet acknowledged that the HRC had a long way to go but stressed the familiar theme of the importance of maintaining channels for open dialogue and noted that the HRC had been hurt by the unlucky timing of having been established shortly before the crisis in Lebanon in the summer of 2006. Pellet asserted that the HRC suffered from a lack of publicity that further reduced the body,s potential positive influence. Pellet also noted that, in the more than sixty years since the founding of the United Nations, the number of member countries had nearly trebled and claimed difficulty in enforcing universal norms derived from the challenge of reconciling much wider diversity than when the norms themselves were established. Pellet stated that, in spite of this wider cultural diversity, there were certain human

rights abuse "red lines" for France, but when Barks-Ruggles pressed Pellet to state them more explicitly, Pellet equivocated.

Middle East

13. (C) In general discussion, Pellet agreed with Barks-Ruggles that Egypt continued to be resistant to efforts to establish and empower civil society. Among North African neighbors, Pellet said that Algeria presented a particular challenge for France owing to its colonial history there. By contrast, Pellet said that Morocco and Senegal were much more open to dialogue and efforts at reinforcing women's rights.

Central Asia

14. (C) In a subsequent conversation, Central Asia desk officers informed Barks-Ruggles that their regional director was currently visiting central Asia and related several conclusions about countries in the region. In Kyrgyzstan, French officials noted that there had been ups and downs in regional human rights progress, that there had been some heartening recent signs of democratization, but that national authorities must have international help in dealing with a serious narcotics trafficking problem. French officials expressed openness to expanded cooperation on in-country projects and mentioned efforts to aid Kyrgyzstan in training judges and security officials to respect civil society. They also said they were in no hurry to see legislative elections held if additional time would increase the chances that they would be carried out more transparently. On Kazakhstan, MFA officials stressed the importance of continued U.S. and European engagement, largely because Russia was likely to

seek to expand its own influence in the country in the absence of ongoing Western efforts. On Turkmenistan, French officials agreed with Barks-Ruggles, assessment that the country is still so isolated and leery of reform from outside that the current challenge lies in communicating effectively and in proceeding at a pace that will establish a basis of trust on which to build future efforts. French officials noted a particular interest in establishing international support structures for agriculture and health initiatives.

UNGA Third Committee - THEMATIC RESOLUTIONS

15. (C) DAS Barks-Ruggles discussed thematic resolutions on State-sanctioned rape and the death penalty with interlocutors. In reference to the U.S.-sponsored resolution on state-sanctioned rape, Pellet noted that Secretary of State for Human Rights Yade supports the initiative strongly. Collet said that her office also hoped to see the UN Security Council focus more on gender-based violence and said that the French government would strongly support annual reporting from peacekeeping missions, including establishing annual reporting requirements. Barks-Ruggles raised a point that had been raised in Berlin, namely that some EU countries - Sweden in particular - kept pushing for unhelpful references to CEDAW. French interlocutors noted the problem and said they would work with us in New York. In response to Barks-Ruggles, explanation of U.S. opposition to the EU-sponsored resolution on the death penalty (due to its call for abolishment of the death penalty), Pellet noted that France was "slower than many EU countries" in outlawing the death penalty and expressed his own observation that there are strong connections between the ongoing use of the death penalty and generally higher levels of societal violence. Within the United States, he cited Texas as an example. Pellet said that France would support the U.S. resolution on UN election mechanisms as well.

16. (C) With respect to the EU-sponsored resolutions on Burma and the DPRK, Barks-Ruggles told Pellet that the USG strongly supports both and is ready to be assist in any way useful. On the Canadian sponsored resolution on Iran, Barks-Ruggles said that the USG is seeking a particularly strong statement on Iran, and noted the increased suppression of freedoms in Iran, such as heightened restrictions on, assembly, media and access to the internet. She pressed for strong EU support for the Canadian text, especially on defeating no-action motions. Pellet, who himself served for four years in Iran, said that France supports and is ready to co-sponsor the resolution but expressed an interest in "correcting minor errors in the text" having to do with how minorities are depicted (particularly France does not want to single out the Baha'is nor to cite the Azeri minority) which, according to Pellet, could serve as a convenient pretext for opponents of the resolution acting in bad faith to label it a "political document."

17. (C) On Belarus, Barks-Ruggles noted that the USG has not yet received formal comments from the EU on this resolution, and underscored that the USG would like the EU to co-table this resolution, and therefore, had delayed informals while awaiting a response. Pellet said that France completely supported the resolution and was interested in co-authoring and promised to press the Portuguese to get comments back to the USG. (Note: Comments were received later that evening. End Note.)

18. (C) On Cuba, Barks-Ruggles outlined the imbalance that has resulted from the elimination of the Special Representative and the UNHRC's inability to take action on Cuba, while Cuba continues to run its anti-U.S. embargo resolution at UNGA 3rd Committee. She explained that, after consulting with EU partner states and others, the USG had decided not to run a country-specific resolution but, in view of the lop-sided view of Cuba now existing in UN human rights bodies, the USG would like EU support on several new initiatives as outlined in Ref A. Barks-Ruggles explained the initiatives, goals: to advance dialogue on the island about the future through release of political prisoners and efforts to press for a dialogue with opposition. They would also send a signal to Cuba from the international community

expressing its ongoing concern over the human rights situation there, and create an opportunity for Cuba to send a signal to the international community about its willingness to engage in genuine dialogue.

19. (C) Pellet said he would review the proposals and expressed the view that Cuba has shown itself to be more open to engagement since the disappearance of the Cuba mandate holder, as evinced by its co-sponsorship of the resolution at the UNHRC renewing the Special Rapporteur on Arbitrary Detention. Pellet speculated that Cuba might now be open to receiving some thematic rapporteurs. Pellet also emphasized the importance of avoiding a Guantanamo resolution because the EU might then be obliged to support it. In a subsequent meeting, Collet agreed that "there needs to be more pressure on Cuba" and informally expressed support for the idea of a Rapporteur on Political Prisoners "and Prisoners of Conscience," but voiced the opinion that International Human Rights Day (December 10) actions should not single out the Castro Regime. While Collet expressed openness to making a stronger statement against human rights abuses in Cuba, she said there was "little chance" that France would not again vote in favor of the embargo resolution.

10. (C) On Uzbekistan, Barks-Ruggles said the USG would rather have the EU co-table a resolution on Belarus rather than fracturing over Uzbekistan. In the interest of pragmatism, Barks-Ruggles said the USG is interested in "winning everything we put on the table." She noted, however, the ongoing USG concern about the grave human rights

situation in Uzbekistan, which has shut down well over 200 NGOs, and expressed USG disappointment over the recent decision by the EU to soften its sanctions there. The Central Asia desk officers expressed grave concern for the security and human rights situation in Uzbekistan but argued that they had seen recent minor progress, which had prompted the EU to decide to renew, but not to apply its visa ban. "A particularly EU decision," they noted, shrugging their shoulders affirmatively when asked if Germany's pushing were what lay behind this. According to the desk officers, after a communication impasse in fall 2006, the Uzbekistan government had become more open to ongoing dialogue and, in May 2007, had allowed an EU experts group limited access to the country's prisons to determine the state of respect for human rights there. Further, in June the Uzbekistan government adopted legislation abolishing the death penalty. The desk officers stressed that sanctions were inherently hard to manage and that they had been instituted to press for an independent international inquiry on Andijon, not for a general improvement of human rights in Uzbekistan. Barks-Ruggles noted that no independent international inquiry had occurred, and there had been no real improvement in human rights either. France would likely have supported an Uzbekistan resolution at UNGA Third Committee by the U.S., this year and agreed that we should consult early next year (they suggested late June or early July) to make a decision "in good time" on whether to run a resolution next year.

¶11. (SBU) Barks-Ruggles also expressed appreciation for France's pro-active efforts to put in place a multi-pronged strategy to defeat no-action motions at the UNGA Third Committee through cooperative and targeted pressure on developing and NAM countries that are committed to human rights issues.

¶12. (SBU) This cable has been cleared by DAS Barks-Ruggles.

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